

honor and pleasure of meeting with servicemembers during my Congressional Delegations abroad. I am always moved by their professionalism, courage, and most especially, their dedication to their families, fellow service members, and country. This Moment of Silence legislation will send a powerful message of appreciation to our veterans for all that they do on behalf of our nation.

I would like to express my thanks to the leadership of the Veterans Affairs Committee, as well as to the bipartisan group of cosponsors who were steadfast in their support of H.R. 995. I am grateful to Senators KIRK and DURBIN for their leadership and stewardship of this initiative on the Senate side. I also wish to thank Daniel and Michael Bendetson, along with their father, Dr. Peter Bendetson, who first approached me with the concept of this tribute and have worked tirelessly for years to bring this proposal to fruition. Finally, I would like to thank all the veterans in the Eighth District of Massachusetts and across America, in whose honor I am proud to have introduced and supported the Veterans Day Moment of Silence Act.

The bill was ordered to be read a third time, was read the third time, and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on S. 1004.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

EXPRESSING PROFOUND CONCERN ABOUT THE ONGOING POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN VENEZUELA

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Affairs be discharged from further consideration of the resolution (H. Res. 851) expressing profound concern about the ongoing political, economic, social and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela, urging the release of political prisoners, and calling for respect of constitutional and democratic processes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, although I do not intend to object, I am proud to be the sponsor of H. Res. 851, which expresses profound concern about the shameful and rampant corruption of President Maduro's government and the plight of the Venezuelan people.

The Maduro regime's efforts to silence political opposition leaders, including by jailing Leopoldo Lopez and Daniel de Ceballos, are unconscionable.

And just last week, the National Electoral Council announced an outrageously high barrier to the referendum on his government that millions of Venezuelans are demanding.

His flagrant misconduct has brought a series of devastating crises to Venezuela. Families all across the country are starving. Their local store shelves are barren, many of them empty of both food and lifesaving medicine.

And Maduro still refuses to listen to the will of his people. They are crying out for their voices to be heard and their rights respected, and we must ensure they are not crying out in vain.

I am proud to cosponsor this legislation with my colleague, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The reservation is withdrawn.

Is there further objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN)?

There was no objection.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 851

Whereas the deterioration of basic governance and the economic crisis in Venezuela have reached deeply troubling levels, which in turn have led to an unprecedented humanitarian situation in Venezuela where millions of people are suffering from severe shortages of essential medicines and basic food products;

Whereas Venezuela lacks more than 80 percent of the basic medical supplies and equipment needed to treat its population, including medicine to treat chronic illnesses and cancer as well as basic antibiotics, and 85 percent of pharmacies are at risk of bankruptcy, according to the Venezuelan Pharmaceutical Federation;

Whereas, despite the massive shortages of basic foodstuffs and essential medicines, President of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro has rejected repeated requests from the majority of members of the National Assembly and civil society organizations to bring humanitarian aid into the country;

Whereas the International Monetary Fund assesses that, in Venezuela, inflation reached 275 percent and the gross domestic product contracted 5.7 percent in 2015, and further projects that inflation will reach 720 percent and the gross domestic product will contract an additional 8 percent in 2016;

Whereas Venezuela's political, economic, and humanitarian crisis is fueling social tensions that are resulting in growing incidents of public unrest, looting, and violence among citizens;

Whereas these social distortions are taking place amidst an alarming climate of violence as Caracas continues to have the highest per capita homicide rate in the world at 120 per 100,000 citizens, according to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime;

Whereas the deterioration of governance in Venezuela has been exacerbated by widespread public corruption and the involvement of public officials in illicit narcotics trafficking and related money laundering, which has led to indictments by the United States Department of Justice and ongoing investigations by the United States Department of the Treasury and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration;

Whereas domestic and international human rights groups recognize more than 85

political prisoners in Venezuela, including opposition leader and former Chacao mayor Leopoldo Lopez, Judge Maria Lourdes Afiuni, Caracas Mayor Antonio Ledezma, former Zulia governor Manuel Rosales, and former San Cristobal mayor Daniel Ceballos;

Whereas, in December 2015, the people of Venezuela elected the opposition coalition (Mesa de Unidad Democrática) to a two-thirds majority in the unicameral National Assembly, with 112 out of the 167 seats compared with 55 seats for the government's Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela party;

Whereas, in late December 2015, the outgoing National Assembly increased the number of seats in the Supreme Court of Venezuela and confirmed magistrates politically aligned with the Maduro Administration and, thereafter, the expanded Supreme Court has blocked four legislators, including 3 opposition legislators, from taking office;

Whereas, during the first 6 months of the new legislature, the Supreme Court has repeatedly issued politically motivated judgments to overturn legislation passed by the democratically elected National Assembly and block internal legislative procedures;

Whereas, in 2016, President Maduro has utilized emergency and legislative decree powers to bypass the National Assembly, which, alongside the actions of the Supreme Court, have severely undermined the principles of separation of powers in Venezuela;

Whereas, in May 2016, Organization of American States Secretary General Luis Almagro presented a 132-page report outlining grave alterations of the democratic order in Venezuela and invoked Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which calls on the OAS Permanent Council "to undertake a collective assessment of the situation";

Whereas, in June 2016, at a joint press conference with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of Canada and President Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico, President Barack Obama stated, "Given the very serious situation in Venezuela and the worsening plight of the Venezuelan people, together we're calling on the government and opposition to engage in meaningful dialogue and urge the Venezuelan government to respect the rule of law and the authority of the National Assembly"; and

Whereas, at the joint press conference with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Peña Nieto, President Barack Obama continued, "Political prisoners should be released. The democratic process should be respected and that includes legitimate efforts to pursue a recall referendum consistent with Venezuelan law."; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its profound concern about widespread shortages of essential medicines and basic food products faced by the people of Venezuela, and urges President Maduro to permit the delivery of humanitarian assistance;

(2) calls on the Government of Venezuela to immediately release all political prisoners, to provide protections for freedom of expression and assembly, and to respect internationally recognized human rights;

(3) supports meaningful efforts towards a dialogue that leads to respect for Venezuela's constitutional mechanisms and resolves the country's political, economic, social, and humanitarian crisis;

(4) affirms its support for OAS Secretary General Almagro's invocation of Article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and urges the OAS Permanent Council, which represents all of the organization's member states, to undertake a collective assessment of the constitutional and democratic order in Venezuela;